

Rob and Daniel Watts

There are so many things to know before doing missional work in a different culture. In this episode: why nobody is too poor to give, how local giving can drive missional accountability, tips on how to maintain a local board, and 3 important principles for effective missionary leadership.

Introduction

Rob: I'm here with Daniel Watts on this broadcast of "When Money Goes on Mission."

Daniel was featured in the book [When Money Goes on Mission](#), chapter one, page one.

I'm gonna read the first paragraph of that, under the title, The Communion of Giving and Receiving.

"When money goes on mission, it travels in the form of financial gifts, carried along in the pockets of those who spend it on the ordinary things of life and ministry, so that they can do the extraordinary things God has called them to do. What follows is a story of one of these extraordinary things. It's a real life parable, about an American, a Romanian, an Egyptian and an old pair of gym socks."

And Daniel is the American. Welcome to our podcast.

Daniel: Thanks.

Rob: So Daniel, why don't you pick up the story from there?

You were a children's pastor at a pretty good-sized church in California.

And how does that...how do you get from there to Romania?



From California to Romania

Daniel: Well, we went on a short term mission trip with the church back East.

We went to Eastern Europe. And it felt like God was calling us go help churches work with children.

So we moved over there right after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

It's interesting that the people in that story, the Egyptian person's still on the board in Egypt.

And the Romanian guy actually works in our office here in the United States now. And has a big leadership position with our organization.

Rob: How interesting.

Daniel: It is, so anyway we started working in Poland, helping churches work with children.

We started work in several Eastern European countries. And I think the work in Romania started in somewhere around 2000. And back in those days, the poverty...the life was just tough in that part of the world.

So I had come from California and a pretty wealthy community. And that is a real impact on you.

So I was so struck by their...what I perceived to be their poverty materially, that I had this idea for all those early years that they were too poor to give financially to support the work in their country.

And it was experience in Romania that changed all that. Pretty dramatically.

Rob: And, can you recall one or two things that brought about that change in your thinking?

'Cause you really did launch a paradigm shift here in terms of shifting the leadership from you to them.



Nobody is Too Poor to Give

Daniel: Yes, well I feel bad, Rob.

I remember I used to come back to board meetings and meeting with donors, and people would ask would the Polish ministry ever support itself financially?

And if they even brought that up. I would talk about how poor people were there. And I would make people feel guilty in the US about their wealth.

And they would just immediately sort of back away from the inquiry even because I would sort of pile the guilt on.

Who are we, wealthy Americans to suggest that they should be giving and supporting their own ministry, where, when we have so much money, et cetera, et cetera.

So one of the things that, there were two things that happened, one of them was, you and I had a conversation. I don't even know if you remember this.

And you said that you had been writing a teaching about the Holy Grail of Paul. And I said, "Oh you mean 1 Corinthians 9?"

Because when you're a missionary and doing, you know faith mission work, the writing he does in 1 Corinthians about raising support as a missionary from the church is what you're taught a lot about.

And you said, "No, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9." And I remember thinking, what's he talking about?

Because 2 Corinthians, and when I went and studied 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, that had a huge effect on me.

Especially the beginning of chapter eight where he talks about, how the Macedonians were.

And they begged to be part of the offering for the Jerusalem church. And gave more than Paul and Titus even thought they could. So that had a big impact on me.

Another thing that's really funny is, the Romanian guy United States to visit. And we were having this big fundraising golf tournament banquet in Orange County, California.

Where they're like auctioning, the worst thing Rob is they auctioned a boat for a week. And it auctioned for \$32,000.

For a week. I didn't want the guy at this event, because it was so you know wildly disconnected from his economic realities, right?

He comes in this event, Rob, and they've got, it's a big fundraiser. We actually auctioned this boat. It's 100 feet long or more.

And it's off the coast of Costa Rica. And it auctioned for \$32,000. Well that's like a decade of income in Romania at that time.

Rob: Yeah.

Daniel: So I didn't even want him at the event, because I thought he'd be in like enormous culture shock.

Well somebody that was involved in the ministry brought him to the event.

And he was there during that auction, and you know there was other things, it was a million dollars at the event.

Well at the end of the event, all I can think of is we got to get him out of here, before he has like a nervous breakdown or something.

'Cause this is so, there's got to be enormous culture shock. So I go over to him and I'm like, "Okay, so you ready to go, we got to get out of here."

And he looks at me and goes, "This was great! "We need to do something like this in Romania!"

And I thought, okay he's like lost his mind or something you know? He's like uh you know?...

And that's where they brought, people just donated things the same here as we would in the States. You know the guy donates his boat for that week.

People donated things and they donated like pickle jars, and shoes, pickle jars with homemade pickles in them, shoes that were like used.

And some gym socks. And they raised money--

Rob: Well the gym socks made it into the book, so they're famous.

Daniel: Exactly, exactly. They had a bunch of stuff like that. And they ended up raising quite a bit of money.

And it all went to support our, the new ministry work at that time in Egypt. Which was just so, that had a huge impact on me, and the leadership of our ministry.

Rob: Yeah.

Daniel: And the truth is nobody's too poor to give.

And some of the most gracious givers in the world are people who don't have a lot materially.



The Importance of Having a Board That Gives

Rob: Now how many...

Daniel: Yeah, we talked about that.

Rob: Yeah, how many times have you seen this replicated now with the work of [Every Generation Ministry](#)?

Daniel: Every country that we work in being the ministry and from the very beginning.

So we started working in the Democratic Republic of Congo the ministry is a couple of years old and this was amazing.

I was at a board meeting there, I don't know it's been like three months ago and at the end of the meeting it was the start of their fiscal year in August.

They, um, asked the board members to write down their financial commitment for the year, in the board meeting handed to the chairman of the board and then he reads it out by name. So awesome.

So afterwards, I ask him like, what, what's that about? And they said, you know David, when he gave to the temple it was public he, everybody knew and it inspired people to give.

And the people being of their leaders. So we thought it was really important to have a board who gives and it's known what they're giving and it provides leadership to our ministry in the DRC which is one of the poorest countries in the world.

Fifteen countries and every single one of them gives money to the ministry, people in the country. And then they pay, they pay for their, the children's ministry training programs that they're in.

They give money for that and they give money for materials that we provide for them. So some of the countries Rob, maybe have all of their income coming from inside their country, other's it's fifty sixty percent.

I think in the Congo it's like twenty-five percent but the ministry is two years old so, three years old.

Rob: What would be your expectation there that, er, as it, I mean, are you seeing improvement every year?

As they get the work out there?

Daniel: Yeah I'm really fascinated about the Congo because I think it would give God so much glory if the Christian communities in those two countries supported their ministry work completely. Especially...

Rob: That would be the Congo and where else?

Daniel: And in India.

Rob: Uh-huh.

Daniel: And especially the Congo, you've been there, it's really impoverished and chaotic and...yeah. That would be amazing.

Rob: Yeah.

Daniel: And I think it's possible.

Rob: And I, let me just play off that comment I think it's possible.

Daniel, um, you were one of the first ministries that I, um, worked with.

Actually when we started the [First Fruit Institute](#), you were client one. You know it's kind of like Ebola one?

Daniel: Yeah. Well you go to the worst cases for help.



Local Giving Drives Missional Accountability

Rob: In any case, what is, what has become of, um, is it or, is it now a more than a pattern in your ministry?

Is it an expectation of local fundraising? And local control? And local boards? And that sort of thing?

Daniel: That board thing was always um, value and indigenous leadership for ten years there.

You just meet leaders that are really Godly, gifted, highly educated, just amazing leaders. And so we always had yeah when were Polish Christian leaders.

The big epiphany was you can't have a Polish ministry if it's governed by a Polish board, all the work is done by Polish leaders, but the funding comes from some other country like the United States.

So the value of having an indigenous ministry was always there from the beginning. The funding issue was a big epiphany that occurred in the last seven or eight years.

And that was really paradigm shifting Rob, because the ministries where we give less now and there's more funding from the Christian dramatically.

Rob: Yeah.

Daniel: Because they're accountable in their own community for their ministry work.

Rob: And um, that's really what happens when local giving happens. The givers then participate in the accountability of the mission.

Daniel: Yeah.

Rob: And it also builds discipleship in the givers.

Daniel: Absolutely.

Rob: That they can take responsibility for mission in their own country and for the um, for the educating of their children in their churches.

Daniel: Yeah. And teaching, another thing that we have. We have so many great stories about we, when we started teaching these principles about giving to our ministry teams lots of them are church leaders also.

So they started preaching and teaching more about money in their churches. And they started creating materials to teach children about giving. And we've had some just amazing stories about children giving that are really inspiring.

When you teach about giving to our board members and um, a lot of them are pastors and they invite pastors to the training and then they go back in their churches and start teaching about money in their churches.

Because they see how that's related to the spiritual vitality of their congregation and then start teach, we've created teaching materials to teach

giving principles to children and we've had some amazing stories about children giving.

And you really see how it builds spiritual vitality in an individual and in a congregation in a church.



How to Develop a Local Board

Rob: Yeah. And so now, when you, when EGM starts in a new country, do you create an expectation right from the start?

For uh, as you develop their local board and other things that this will be not a western led, western funded mission?

Daniel: Especially the board. That's really crucial.

You know, the United States, you really can't serve as an Elder in a church or a board member of a non-profit organization don't support it financially.

That's just sort of a given here and everybody knows that. Overseas, there's some weird, I don't know if you've seen this.

We've seen this a lot. Christian leaders have this idea that if you serve on a board you, a Christian non-profit board, you should receive some monetary benefits for it.

Like it's a corporate board in the United States.

Rob: Yeah, exactly.

Daniel: So we killed that and really created the notion that if you're, the Matthews 6 thing Rob, which is, if your heart's there then your treasure has to follow that and if it doesn't then your heart's probably somewhere else and you should give there and lead there.

Rob: Well...

Daniel: And it can be really effective.

Rob: Yeah, and that's been, I learned that lesson early on at the rescue mission where I worked.

I felt at, I feel at some point it's immoral for a board member, they're stakeholders, they are in a corporate world, they are um, they're the equivalent of the investors.

Daniel: Right.

Rob: And um, and the return is the eternal return of the work that we all share in, when we participate in the work.

And so, for me I think it's a sinful behavior on the part of board members to expect staff to raise money and not to give or to use their influence to give to the mission itself.

In fact, I don't think you should go on a board where you don't have full engagement with your spouse.

Whether you're a female going on the board and it's your husband or your wife that they are into this, so that over and above the giving that you do in your church and your local community in that sense.

This is where if your serving on the board this is your next most important gift.

Daniel: Absolutely. And Rob we've got, 'kay there's fifteen countries.

I think we have more than 150 board members now and every year we do a board evaluation and, inside the country, the director and the chairman of the board or the chairperson of the board will do that.

And with almost no exceptions, if board members aren't involved in the ministry they don't attend, they miss meetings, they're not engaged, et cetera.

Those are the board members who aren't giving financially and their heart isn't in it and it just gets reflected in their engagement in the ministry.

And I know for our ministry here in the United States when we first started the ministry and I saw it, your heart isn't in it so you're late to meetings, you're disengaged, not prepared, you can't participate in decision making in the meetings, you aren't involved, you don't travel overseas, et cetera.

Those are the same people that aren't involved financially.

Rob: Yeah.

Daniel: So, that's an expectation right from the beginning when we start the ministry work.



How to Empower, Equip, and Release the Local Board

Rob: So, um, take me through the first time you realized that you needed to empower or equip the board to take the leadership and for yourself to release responsibility.

I would hope that some of our listeners are mission leaders like yourself, facing into this question of: how do I work with my international partner and empower them or equip them depending on if you're releasing power down to them or equipping them to take power.

Whichever way you want to look at the equation. Um, how do you encourage them to think about that that shift?

Because I find that in my coaching a lot of ministries fear um, it, it's either a fear or lack of control and then, and therefore, quality control and this kind of

thing, or it's a fear of how, how am I gonna get along without them if they can take care of themselves?

There may be that one playing around in there. I just want to know, how did you work that through?

Daniel: Okay, it's a little ugly and it started right at the very beginning of the work in Poland.

So when I moved over there, I was from a big church and for seminary and you're coming from the States and you've got a lot of money backed behind you.

They know that and, so I went over there and I studied Polish for like a year and a half and then I did what I refer to as the courtesy tour in retrospect and that ministry.

I had done it for ten years. I had a Seminary degree. I had the access to financial resources and my idea of helping them was: tell them all what to do.

But at least go on a courtesy tour and at least ask some questions out of courtesy.

Rob: Yeah. Did you read somewhere you were supposed to ask instead of tell?

Daniel: So, it was so bad. Anyway, so I remember, I was going around doing these courtesy tours and I would sit down with these children's workers, pastors in churches, and I'd try to find the different denominational leaders and so on.

And I would ask them about their children's ministry but it was mostly just a courtesy 'cause I wanted to, you know, make them think that I appreciated what they had done before I told everybody what to do.

So I was at one of those meetings and this was the big paradigm shifter. There were about ten or twelve women in it and I was the only man.

And they, I don't know if you've ever been in meetings where they'd one up each other on persecution stories?

Rob: How'd that go? Tell us how that goes.

Daniel: And then somebody tells something that's just horrible right? Like, they got arrested for teaching Sunday school and then the next person says, "oh that's nothing!"

And then they tell us something worse. And then the next person says, "oh that's nothing compared to this!" and then they tell their story which is, and they got 'em.

And they were incredible you know like, I remember one lady, she's gotta be with the Lord. She's such a precious person.

She actually got arrested for teaching Sunday school right across the street from the, basically the Polish KGB in her, in this kitchen.

And they came across, somebody was an informant on her and they came an arrested her for teaching Sunday school. If you've been taught, done ministry in Southern California and you're 31 years old and you hear stories like that, I remember my eyes, I was just like, "what the heck?"

One teacher told me, one of the ladies said she got arrested. She got some lesson rod from Holland and she was hand copying it and they caught her with it, right?

And they arrested her and she went to jail for like 30 days. Well they start telling those stories and you know, here I was clueless about anything.

Well I mean, I heard a little or something but it just, okay, so I was humbled but they just kept going, you know, the one up-ing each other and finally, I remember when Alicia Leptchuk shared that story about getting arrested in her kitchen and I thought that was before I was born.

And who am I to come over here and tell these heroes of the Christian faith what to do? And I was like, humiliated at my own arrogance.

And these ladies are like, all of them had university degrees. All of them had more years of experience working with children than I had been alive.

They all loved children. They all love churches. Some of them had ministry across church denominations.

And I realized that if you can agree about some Biblical ministry principles together that they are clearly the best people to do ministry work.

And that was when we had the big paradigm shift and came to the conclusion that we should have a governing board of Christian leaders there and leaders doing the ministry work itself that are Polish and just focus on the Biblical principles we agree about.

And if you can do that, you unleash a lot of ministry fruit.



3 Important Principles For Effective Missionary Leadership

Rob: So, how many places have um, has EGM done that now?

Daniel: That, well, fifteen and we're about to do it in two more. Seventeen countries.

Rob: Alright. And so, if, what would you say to a leader in your same position, has some ministries, they have some ministries going.

They feel they should, should do this, how do they do it? What are the couple of things they need to think about when they actually begin to say, these folks need to take leadership?

And how do you give them the actual decision making and the consequences of the decision making? And in effect, graduate them?

Daniel: All right, so I think there's a few important principles you have to latch onto. I would say they're this.

1. FOCUS ON BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Daniel: One of them is, the concern. You know the concern about control in ministry quality is shouldn't be just dismissed and we should share that and it's a legitimate concern but I think the way down that road is to focus on Biblical principles and not on programmatic sorts of things.

So stop exporting programs and focus on here's Biblical principles and if we can agree about those between the cultures, then they can implement them programmatically in their country.

So getting a real focus on: what are the Biblical principles that are crucial in our ministry?

They need to focus the training on, the partnership on, the agreement on, in ministry is about these Biblical principles and we agree with and we're gonna agree that you're gonna implement those inside your culture.

So I think that's a big issue.

2. DON'T BE ARROGANT AND IGNORANT

I think another issue is to realize that there's really gifted leaders in other countries and it's really arrogant to think that's not true.

And there is this sort of underlying arrogance that we know everything about everything.

Rob: Well, I do. I thought you did too Daniel but...I'm sorry. I don't know why I brought you on this interview.

Daniel: And you know, you've seen this, there's really gifted preachers, really gifted children's workers.

And thoughtful and even creative and thought leading in other cultures. And you just have to recognize that and not have a kind of cultural arrogance.

And related to that Rob is the money issue in my view. And because we bring the money, this is where the problems, I think are largely rooted.

What I mean by that is, let me just put it this way, this is the illustration I try to give people.

If you had four people from workers fly to California next week and organized the children's workers conference and they're going to teach in Mandarin Chinese. Never been here before and they're gonna teach about children's ministry and they invite everybody to come.

I don't know anybody that would go to that. It's gonna be translated. 'Cause what do they know about children's ministry in the United States? They just got here. And why would I wanna go hear what--

However, if they announce that they were gonna have a drawing and five of the participants were gonna be rewarded a million dollars cash for their children's ministry program you'd probably have 250 people there.

So the people don't realize that the money thing is always in the background for the American missionary. I've seen it for South Korean missionaries where the indigenous--

Okay, we're gonna go hear what they have to say because they may be crazy but there could be some financial for us and it's worth it.

Rob: Right.

Daniel: I realize there's real...

Rob: Especially if there hasn't been a tradition yet in their own setting of local funding for local ministry.

Daniel: Exactly, exactly.

Rob: And so you're always looking for who's coming to town with potential money or connections to money.

3. KNOW THAT YOU DON'T OWN THE MINISTRY

Daniel: Yep, absolutely. And then the third thing is I think we need to have a little different theological Biblical approach to things.

This idea we're giving things. Giving the ministry to someone and et cetera, et cetera. You know I believe that Jesus Christ actually started our ministry.

He's leading it. He's got the love for the children. He's the one. Have a great transformational children's ministry in churches around the world.

And he's not an American. And this idea of we own it and we're giving it to somebody else I think we should rethink that a little bit.

And if we do, it would be easier to let go. 'Cause that's really the issue.



Who's Involved in the Process of Pioneering a New Country?

Rob: So today, when you pioneer a new country, when EGM pioneers a new country, is it a multi-national effort or is it still the American team?

Daniel: No 'cause, I said that guy in the story who's Romanian is now on our staff here.

We brought him here on purpose because we wanted to not have just an American team here and we've got on our international team, we've got a guy from Mexico, another Romanian, an Egyptian--

They're all involved in the startup of a ministry in a country. And we have Americans also.

Rob: Wow. So um...

Daniel: The focus is all on Biblical principles and we know there's great Christian leaders in every country.

We know there's great children's workers there, you just gotta go find them.



Know the Local Culture *Before* Developing a Curriculum for Them

Rob: Well I should mention to those listeners to this podcast or viewers, that if they haven't read the story in chapter one of the book *When Money Goes on Mission* this isn't just a matter of, this is very expensive to set up a new children's, a country-wide children's ministry that is going to serve the local church.

'Cause there's a lot of training venues that has to be put together, curriculum, you need a publishing house for the contextualized curriculum in their own

settings and in many places that infrastructure hasn't existed until you've created it.

Daniel: Correct. It's focused on churches.

Rob: Right.

Daniel: Correct.

Rob: And so did that form a challenge in the early fundraising in where there was a necessary partnership.

That's where this communion of giving and receiving comes from.

Where you're still bringing something, but how do you become equals at the cross, knowing that no one is an over-dog and no one is an underdog?

Even though in effect the early technology that you're bringing to them. The technology some support services and knowledge actually is coming from your side.

Daniel: Yes, there's a, I think there's a... there's a risk in that when you go into a country and start workers there and then you find people who can write curriculum you train them and they start writing materials and then you invest in the publishing of those materials, there's a risk involved in that.

The church may not value it and the way you know that is through the money. So if you create materials and the church doesn't buy it and use its resources for it. It's not valuable to them.

So we actually just saw that happen in Uganda where we, you know in the United States when you write curriculum, you tell the teachers basically everything to do. Because you know, if you were involved in teaching a Sunday school in the children's ministry Rob, we're getting older and you're gonna teach three and four year olds.

You need somebody to tell you, here's exactly what to do, here's what to say, have them sit down in a circle and hold hands and say to the children, and you have black letters here's what you say.

So you give them that curriculum. And when you write a lesson like that it can be like six or seven pages long.

So when you do a lesson, a twelve series lesson through the book of Jonah you end up with eight-four pages of lesson material and then the introductory stuff and so on and so forth.

You end up with a hundred page book. So then we trained people in Uganda and they wrote their materials in Swahili and in English and they started to distribute.

And when they did, we could, they couldn't sell the materials and we thought well maybe it's too, the quality is too high and they can't afford it, maybe it's something rather et cetera, et cetera.

And so our director started asking church leaders why there's not interest in the materials because the approach we have to ministry is represented in those materials and people loved that.

The answer was, the lessons are too long. It's an oral culture. We don't like reading all that stuff. Just give us the lesson on a page. We can figure it out. We're not gonna read seven pages.

That's like American, German, Europe That's the way they, they read everything. They write thousand page books and all that. That's not African. We talk about it.

It's an oral culture. So we couldn't sell the books. It took like three or four months to sell them all right?

So they actually went back and hacked the lessons down to two pages and instead of a hundred page book they ended up with like a twenty five page book.

Same lessons, same aim, same everything. Just shorter instructions and so on. And sold, I don't know the same print run in thirty days.



Closing Thoughts

Rob: Okay but now in terms of quality control and your sense of did this fulfill the aims of the program?

Daniel: Yeah. So you gotta go see in churches. Clearly the church wants it though. To me the litmus is what happens with the money, if a church in Africa--

It's not like they have discretionary money laying around. It must be valuable to them. There's something to be said immediately for that.

So I guess, what I'm saying is when you go into a country the risk is you launch a ministry and it's not really valued and the investment of God's resources is lost on it.

And you can't move forward because your ministry isn't really valued or needed and then you just need to go somewhere else.

Rob: This is where you tend to wanna lead with your ears instead of your mouth.

Daniel: And with your wallet. So the big problem I've seen is, we do things, we print things, we spend money on things, we do programs, et cetera and it cost no one anything in the country.

Rob: Yeah.

Daniel: So they'll come. Two nights in a hotel. Five hundred children's workers at some big training thing.

It's all paid for by some organization. We don't really know if it's valuable to them.

We charge them fifty dollars for the two nights in the hotel and the meals it's on then you'll find out is it valuable or not?

Rob: And that's where things have gone. And now my friend, you find yourself in a transition.

Daniel: Yes, I do. Well I've been doing this for twenty six years so it's time for some new leadership.